JOYTHI DEVI

THE LIGHT IN DARK

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GODDESS JOYTHI

GODDESS JJOYTHI IS THE GODDESS OF LIGHT AND SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF LORD SHIVA AND PARVTHI DEVI. SHE IS VERY CLOSE TO HER BROTHER LORD MURUGAN

MOTHER IS THE GODDESS OF LIGHTS AND ILLUMINATION. LITERALLY 'JYOTI' MEANS LIGHT. EXTERNAL LIGHTS PERTAIN TO SENSE OF SIGHT BUT MOTHER JYOTI BLESSES THAT ONE SEES THE INNER LIGHT.

DARKNESS SIGNIFIES NEGATIVITY, NEGATIVE QUALITIES, EMOTIONS OR EXPERIENCES. THESE SYMBOLIZE IGNORANCE AND THE ILL-EFFECTS IT BRINGS TO THE HUMAN MIND AND LIFE.

LIGHT SIGNIFIES THE VERY OPPOSITE AND STANDS FOR ILLUMINATION, TRUTH AND LOVE. IN VEDANTIC THOUGHTS BRAHMAN IS SELF-SHINING, SELF-LUMINOUS AND SHINES BY HIS OWN BRIGHTNESS. ‘AS HE SHINES, DOES EVERYTHING ELSE SHINE AFTER.’

THE CONCEPT OF JYOTI IS IN LINE WITH BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD 1.3.28: 'ASATO MA SAT GAMAYA; TAMASO MA JYOTIR GAMAYA ; MRITYOR MA AMRITAM GAMAYA' MEANING 'FROM IGNORANCE LEAD ME TO TRUTH, FROM DARKNESS LEAD ME TO LIGHT, FROM DEATH LEAD ME TO IMMORTALITY'. THERE ARE VARIOUS SCRIPTURAL COMMENTARIES ON JYOTI CONNECTING LIGHT TO THE SACRED FIRES OF AGNI AND ILLUMINATION OF SURYA, THE SUN GOD. INDEED, THE CANDLE IN A CHURCH OR THE BUDDHIST LAMP POINT IN THE SALE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION BUT SAID IN THEIR OWN WAY.

THE PANCHAMAHABHUTAS – EARTH, WATER, FIRE, AIR AND SPACE EMANATE FROM BRAHMAN; THEY ARE THE OMNIPRESENT COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH CONSTITUTES ALL MATTERS AND ENERGY IN THE UNIVERSE - TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD 2.1. THE YOGAKUNDALINI UPANISHAD ADDS THAT AFTER A PERSON'S BODY SEES MORTAL DEATH, HE OR SHE ATTAINS 'A DISEMBODIED STATE, AFTER WHICH THE PERSON DISCARDS THE BODY, AS IF MOVING THROUGH THE AIR.

THE HIGHEST LIGHT THAT THE EMANCIPATED 'SELF' REACHES IS DIVINE BY NATURE. DIVINITY GOES BY MANY NAMES IN HINDUISM. HOWEVER, SPIRITUAL TRADITION IS CLEAR THAT WE SEE UNITY IN VARIETY AND THAT THESE ARE MANIFESTATIONS OF ONE DIVINE REALITY. NARADAPARIVRAJAKA UPANISHAD STATES THIS DIVINITY IS 'HIGHER THAN THE HIGHEST, GREATER THAN THE GREAT, AND NATURALLY BRILLIANT.' SKANDA UPANISHAD MENTIONS THIS TO BE, THE LIGHT OF ALL LIGHTS.

MYTHOLOGICALLY, THIS CREATIVE PROCESS IS SYMBOLISED BY THE DIVINE FAMILY OF LORD SHIVA. IN ADDITION TO HIS SPOUSE GODDESS PARVATHI, HIS SONS, GANESHA AND SKANDA, A DAUGHTER GODDESS JYOTI IS MENTIONED ALLEGORICALLY. DID THE DIVINE COUPLE HAVE A DAUGHTER NAMED JYOTI?

GODDESS JYOTI, GODDESS OF LIGHT, IS SAID TO REPRESENT THE POWER OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY – BRAHMAN THAT ILLUMINATES OUR MINDS. SHE IS SAID TO GIVE SHAPE AND FORM TO ALL CREATED THINGS AND BEINGS IN THE WORLD. IN PINNING HER STATUS, GODDESS JYOTI IS STATED TO BE 'SKANDA'S SISTER'. MURUGA'S VEL, SEVAL AND MAYIL NEEDS FURTHER ELABORATION HERE AS THEY SEEM CONNECTED TO JYOTI. WHEN MURUGA STANDS AS DANDA PANI WITH HIS VEL, HE REPRESENTS BOTH SAGUNA AND NIGUNA ASPECTS OF THE INFINITE DIVINE.

HIS VAHANA, THE PEACOCK, IS SAID TO SHOW THE SHAPE OF THE PRANAVA OM WHEN IT SPREADS ITS TAIL. WITHIN IT IS THE ‘PRAHBRAHMA JYOTI’ AND THE SUBORDINATED SERPENT SHOWS THE MAYA IMPURITY COMPLETELY OVERPOWERED BY THE POWER OF PRANAVA.

THE JOY REVEALED BY THE PEACOCK DANCE DISPLAYS INNER JOY SYMBOLIZING THE PREDOMINANCE OF SATTVA OVER THE RAJAS AND TAMAS QUALITIES. THE PREDOMINATING SATTVA IS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE ACQUISITION OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE, THE JYOTI OF TRUTH SYMBOLIZED BY LORD MURUGA. THUS EVEN HIS VAHANA HAS ENTIRELY CONQUERED PRIDE, EGOISM AND VANITY.

THE SEVAL OR COCKEREL ALSO SYMBOLIZES THE PRANAVA AS NADA BRAHMAN – THE SOUND FORM OF GOD. IT IS THE COCK THAT PROCLAIMS OR ANNOUNCES THE RISING SUN. THIS SYMBOLIZES THE DAWN OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE SUN, THE HEAVENLY BODY THAT DISPELS DARKNESS. THUS THE SEVAL IS ALSO JYOTI THAT DISPELS IGNORANCE AND ANNOUNCES THE APPROACH OF KNOWLEDGE.

VEL: VEL OR SPEAR, IN THE HANDS OF LORD MURUGA, IS AN EMBODIMENT OF HIS MOTHER, PARVATHI'S POWER TO ANNIHILATE EVIL. IN A SENSE IT IS ALSO THE POWER OF SHIVA-SHAKTI. IT IS OF SIMILAR STATUS TO THAT OF HIS FATHER, LORD SHIVA'S TRISULAM. THE VEL AS AN EMBLEM OF POWER, WAS PRESENTED BY PARVATHI TO MURUGA TO INDICATE HIS RULE OVER THE UNIVERSE. OVER TIME THE VEL HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF WORSHIP AND DEVOTEES DO OBEISANCE TO IT SINGULARLY.

IN THE SKANDA PURANA, THE WAR BETWEEN MURUGAN AND THE ASURA SURAPADMAN IS DESCRIBED. SURA DISGUISES HIMSELF AS A MANGO TREE TO EVADE DETECTION. MURUGA'S VEL, HOWEVER SPLITS THE TREE INTO TWO; ONE BECOMING A SEVAL - ROOSTER AND THE OTHER A MAYIL – PEACOCK. THESE ARE SYMBOLIC OF MURUGAN'S BATTLE FLAG AND THE OTHER, SYMBOL OF VALOUR. THIS IS A TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL, WHICH ALLEGORY IS SUCCINCTLY EXPLAINED BY HIS HOLINESS SWAMI SIVANANDA.

SWAMI SIVANANDA WRITES THAT THE VEL OR SPEAR WAS GIVEN TO SUBRAHMANYA BY PARVATI, THE EMBODIMENT OF SIVA-SAKTI. IT, THEREFORE, INDICATES THAT THE SPEAR WAS THE SYMBOL OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE AS COMING OUT OF PARVATI, THE PARA SAKTI. THE SHAPE OF THE VEL ALSO SHOWS THAT KNOWLEDGE IN THE FORM OF JYOTIS WILL START FROM MULADHARA, WHICH IS THE BOTTOM OF THE VEL, PASS THROUGH THE INTERMEDIATE NADIS, WHICH ARE REPRESENTED BY THE BODY OF THE VEL AND PIERCE THROUGH THE THOUSAND-PETALLED BRAHMARANDHRA, WHICH IS REPRESENTED BY THE SHARP, LEAF-SHAPED END OF THE VEL.

THE SPEAR OR VEL IS THE WEAPON WHICH PIERCES THROUGH THE DEMON OF IGNORANCE. THIS IS EKAGRA CHITTA OR THE ONE-POINTED MIND SO MUCH INSISTED UPON IN RAJA YOGA WITHOUT WHICH PROGRESS IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE YOGI. IT IS THE PRELIMINARY FOR CONCENTRATION, MEDITATION AND ABSORPTION—ALL OF WHICH TOGETHER CONSTITUTE THE YOGIC SAMYAMA. IN THE LEGEND, IT IS SOORAPADMA, THE ASURA, WHO ARE SLAIN BY THE VEL. THAT ASURA IS NONE OTHER THAN IGNORANCE.”

SHAIVITE COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS: HOW IS COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS REPRESENTED BY THE SIVA FAMILY? LORD SHIVA –THE COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS, THE GODDESS PARVATHI – CREATIVE ENERGY, GANESHA SYMBOLIZES THE ELEMENTS OF EARTH AND WATER, SKANDA REPRESENTS THE ELEMENT OF FIRE. GODDESS JYOTI IS SAID TO SYMBOLIZE THE TWO ELEMENTS OF AIR AND SPACE. SINCE FIRE USES AIR AND BURNS IN SPACE, IN HINDU MYTHOLOGY JYOTI IS ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH SKANDA AND IS KNOWN MORE AS SKANDA'S SISTER THAN AS GANESHA'S SISTER. SHE IS THEREFORE WORSHIPPED IN HER FORMLESS- ARUPA ASPECT IN ALL TEMPLES WHERE LORD SKANDA IS WORSHIPPED.

IN THE SKANDA PURANA ACCOUNTS, SKANDA IS SIVA HIMSELF AS HE WAS BORN AFTER INTENSE TAPAS OF SIX SPARKS FROM SHIVA'S FOREHEAD. GODDESS JYOTI IS SAID TO BE BORN OF ONE SPARK FROM PARVATHI'S FOREHEAD AND FASHIONED AS THE VEL TO FIGHT SURAPADMAN. THIS VEL IS THUS SAID NOT JUST AN INVISIBLE WEAPON BUT A DEITY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. DR ALAGGAPAN WRITES: "JYOTI IS A MEMBER OF THE SHIVA FAMILY. SHE IS A PART OF THE ETERNAL GODHEAD. WHEN SHIVA - STATIC CONSCIOUSNESS, UNITED WITH SHAKTI - KINETIC ENERGY, GANESHA - SOUND AND SKANDA -LIGHT WERE BORN. JYOTI, THE 'SPARK OF LIGHT' WAS ALSO BORN OUT OF THIS UNION. SHE REPRESENTS THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE OF LIGHT SINCE SHE IS ACTIVE IN CREATION, WHILE SKANDA REPRESENTS THE MALE PRINCIPLE OF LIGHT. SHE IS PREDOMINANTLY MADE OF LIGHT LIKE SKANDA AND MAY BE CONSIDERED AS SKANDA'S SISTER."

IN HER ARUPA STATE NONE OTHER THAN THE VEL IN THE HANDS OF LORD MURUGA. AS AN ENERGIZED AND DYNAMIC WEAPON, SHE IS 'SHAKTI VEL'. AS A PRECIOUS STONE SHE IS 'RATNA VEL'. GODDESS JYOTI IS 'JNANA VEL' AS SHE REMOVES DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE. AS SHE PROVIDES FOR VICTORIOUS SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT, SHE IS 'VETRI VEL'. THUS GODDESS JYOTI ASSISTS LORD MURUGA TO WIN OVER INTERNAL BATTLES ON THE SPIRITUAL PATH LEADING TO MOKSHA. SINCE THE VEL IN QUESTION IS MADE OF FIRE, IT CANNOT BE DEFEATED IN ITS ARUPA OR FORMLESS FORM. GODDESS JYOTI IS SAID TO BE THE FORM OF DURGA TO PROTECT HUMAN KIND.

KUNDALINI: THE HUMAN BODY IS THE EMBODIMENT OF A TEMPLE. SHIVA AND SHAKTI CONSTITUTE THE RIGHT AND LEFT NOSTRILS THROUGH WHICH ONE BREATHES. SRI GANESHA RESIDES AT THE BASE OF THE SPINE FROM WHICH JYOTI OR THE KUNDALINI FORCE, RISES THROUGH THE FIVE CAKRAS – MULADHARA, MANIPURAKA, SWADHISTANA, ANAHATA, VISUDHI AND AJNA CAKRA. THESE ARE SAID TO BE THE SIX BATTLE HOUSES OF LORD SKANDA.

ACCORDING TO TANTRA YOGA, JYOTI IS THE AROUSED KUNDALINI SHAKTI OR LATENT ENERGY THAT RESIDES IN THE AJNA CHAKRA – PSYCHIC CENTER BETWEEN THE EYEBROWS IN THE FOREHEAD AND IS EXPERIENCED AS LIGHT IN DEEP MEDITATION. "WHEN THE KUNDALINI SHAKTI TRAVELS UP THE SPINE AND REACHES THE AJNA CAKRA IN THE FOREHEAD, THE MERGER WITH SHAKTI RESIDING THERE REPRESENTS THE CONFLUENCE OF THE POWER OF THE MOTHER, BEING GIVEN TO AND BECOMING PART OF THE SON. THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE HIGHER SELF AND THE LOWER SELF RAGES IN THE SIX CAKRAS, OR THE BATTLE HOUSES OF LORD SKANDA.

AFTER WINNING THE BATTLES, JYOTI REACHES HER MOTHER IN THE SIXTH BATTLE HOUSE OF SKANDA, KNOWN AS AJNA CAKRA."

JYOTI WORSHIP: IN HER BRIGHTNESS AND OF SIMILAR AGE TO THE GIRL IN THE MYTHS SURROUNDING GODDESS TRIPURASUNDARI, SHE IS SAID TO SYMBOLIZE THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE THAT DISPELS THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE. LIGHT SYMBOLIZES ILLUMINATION. HER WORSHIP IS SAID TO GO TOWARDS WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

GODDESS JYOTI IN HER VEL MANIFESTATION IS INSEPARABLE FROM LORD MURUGA. WHEN THE VEL IS WORSHIPPED, ONE WORSHIPS GODDESS JYOTI ALSO. AS 'SARAVABAVAYAI' SHE IS INTERTWINED WITH SARAVANA AND ACTS FOR HIM. IN PALAMUTIRCOLAI TEMPLE, JYOTI IS WORSHIPPED AS 'RAKKAYI' ON FULL MOON DAYS. AS A VILLAGE DEITY, RAKKAYI HAS THE FACE OF FIRE SYMBOLIZING THE VEL. IT IS SAID THAT THE 'ARUTPERUM JYOTI' OF THE JYOTI FESTIVAL AT TIRUVANNAMALAI TEMPLE REFERS TO THE GODDESS. THE NORTH INDIAN 'JWALAMUKHI' IS CLAIMED TO BE A REFERENCE TO GODDESS JYOTI.

ELOBORATIONS OF THE ARUPA WORSHIP OF GODDESS JYOTI SEEMS TO BE A RECENT ENLIGHTENMENT BY SRI LA SRI PANDRIMALAI SWAMIGAL. IN PUTTING TOGETHER THESE NOTES, I HAVE BEEN INSPIRED BY A BEAUTIFUL TAMIL ARTICLE 'SWARUPA VEL – SKANDA'S SISTER JYOTI' BY DR ALAGAPPA ALAGGAPAN. THE WRITER CONVINCINGLY SEEMS TO HAVE HIGHLIGHTED GODDESS JYOTI TO BE AMONG THE PANTHEON OF HINDU GODDESSES.

SRIMATHI RADHARANI IS NOT MENTIONED IN THE BHAGWATAM BUT ONE FEELS HER PRESENCE IN THE HEART. ONE TRANSCENDS METAPHORS AND SYMBOLISM TO ACHIEVE SUCH PRESENCE. THAT IS A OVERWHELMING FEELING ABOUT RADHA. SIMILARLY, MUCH CAN BE DESIRED ABOUT THE STATUS OF GODDESS JYOTI AS A MEMBER OF THE SHIVA FAMILY OR WHETHER HINDU SYMBOLISM OF SKANDA'S VEL IS BEING GIVEN A STRETCHED INTERPRETATION TO GIVE LIFE TO A GODDESS IN THE NAME OF FEMININE ENERGY SO REQUIRED OF THE VEL.

IN THE PERENNIAL WISDOM TRADITION OF HINDUISM AND VEDANTIC THOUGHTS, ONE IS TO "FILL THE HEART WITH THE OIL OF LOVE. PLACE IN IT THE WICK OF SINGLE-POINTED MIND. LIGHT IT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH AND REMOVE THE DARKNESS OF IGNORANCE AROUND YOU. JUST AS ONE LAMP CAN LIGHT MANY LAMPS; LET EACH OF US KINDLE THIS LIGHT IN MANY HEARTS.' GODDESS JYOTI IS THE DIVINE REMINDER THAT "THE LIGHT THAT SHINES ABOVE THE HEAVENS AND ABOVE THIS WORLD, THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE HIGHEST WORLD, BEYOND WHICH THERE ARE NO OTHERS–THAT IS THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN THE HEARTS OF MEN" - CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD 3.13.7.

JYOTI AHAVAL: THE TAMIL SAGE, SRI RAMALINGA SWAMIGAL OR VALLALAR, ENCOURAGED THE WORSHIP BRAHMAN AS LIGHT. WRITING HIS EXPERIENCES, HE SAID, THAT 'NO SOONER THE LIGHT WAS PERCEIVED, HAPPINESS PREVAILED ON ME; THE SWEET NECTAR WAS TASTED BY ME AS SOON AS THE ARUTPERUNJOTHI – SUPREME GRACE OF LIGHT, BECAME VISIBLE.' SWAMIGAL ADVOCATES JYOTI UPASANA. THE HYMNS OF 1000 VERSES ARE CALLED ARUL PERUM JYOTI AHAVAL. IT WAS A FAVOURITE OF SRI BHAGAVAN RAMANA MAHARISHI.

HARA HARA HARA HARA MAHADEVA.





J O Y T H I D E V I

THE GODDESS JYOTI IS CONSIDERED TO BE A HINDU GODDESS OF LIGHT AND THE "VEL". SHE IS THE DAUGHTER OF LORD SHIVA AND GODDESS PARVATI AND IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HER BROTHER LORD MURUGAN BECAUSE SHE IS THE GODDESS OF "VEL".